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# The Effects of Urbanization on the Administrative System of Urawa City Government

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A salient feature of urbanization process in Japan in the post war decades has been the rapid growth of peripheral cities of Tokyo and the other metropolis. The dramatic increase in population of these cities, which includes Urawa, however was also accompanied by multifaceted problems of urban congestion. Urawa's population during the period 1955 - 1985 increased considerably from 143 thousand to 377 thousand. Given the symbiotic relationship between the size of the city and the responsibilities it has to perform, the Urawa city government had to implement various infrastructural and social facilities as response to emerging urban problems. In planning and implementing these facilities, the city's administrative system naturally underwent significant transformation, including an expansion in term of number of personnel.

This study examined firstly the development process of Urawa city over 1955-1984 period using three indicators namely, *demographic changes, changes in employment structure, and conversion of agricultural land to urban usage*. In order to better understand the development process, the time period was divided

into three phases : (i) the initial period where urbanization was low (1955 - 1961) ; (ii) the period of dramatic urbanization (1962 - 1976) ; and (iii) the period of stabilization of urban growth (1977 - 1984).

In analysing the city's development process, *the focus of the study was on sources of funding for meeting the needs of urban change as well as changes in the city machinery*. More specifically, the study strived to ascertain how the city manage to meet the new demands and responsibilities of rapid urban growth in the face of its given revenue base. A relevant question here was to what extent did transfers from the central and prefectural governments play any significant part in supplementing the city's revenue to meet the increased level of expenditures arising from rapid urbanization.

The study revealed variations in the city's financial structure between the three time periods. Subsidies which consisted of national and prefectural disbursement as well as *local loans and bonds were found to be at its highest during the second period*, much more significant than

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the other periods, *when compared with the local taxes*. The possible explanation for this being that the city's revenue source were not commensurate with the new and heavy demands of urban problems and central government intervention in the form of subsidies was essential so as not exacerbate adverse living conditions or ecological balance. *The relative importance of subsidies however declined during the third period in which the pace of urbanization had slowed down*. Lesser dependence on subsidies at this stage could be attributed to urban problems easing off and exerting less strain on the city revenues. Besides, *urban development also meant an expanded revenue base*. Over time, the clustering of population had led to agglomeration economies and an expanded revenue source in the form of higher property tax revenue from increased usage of land for industrial and residential purposes, and larger inhabitant tax as well as corporation tax.

It was however necessary to determine whether central government subsidies were extended to rectify the mismatch between the city's revenue and expenditures or whether the move was part of a nation-wide thrust to stimulate an economy debilitated by the oil crisis. While it is noted that urban projects undertaken to stimulate economic activities could also have alleviated part of the urban problems, *the study results reveal that without the impacts of oil crisis such subsidies played an inferior role to local taxes during the period of high urban growth*.

In term of city's machinery, considerable expansion both in term of organization as well as personnel occurred during the second phase. The third period was one of consolidation and stabilization. Such a trend does not imply that the demands of urban growth have all been completely met by the city government. What may be inferred is that the severity of urban problems has tapered off and the existing institutional capacity

and capability is able to function at an acceptable level without any major expansions. Given the dynamics of urban growth, new demands are bound to emerge for which various specialists may be hired. *But massive recruitment of general administrative staff may be a thing of the past for the city*. *The city could possibly resort to create and hoc task forces to meet any new demand rather than creating new divisions*. Such task forces could be dismantled as soon as the specific problem is resolved, thus averting the need to absorb personnel whose expertise may no longer be needed.

The study results do shed light on some of the similar issues of less developed countries (LDCs), where city authorities are faced with even more serious dilemma of increasing expenditures against an atrophied revenue base and an less capability of resource allocation from the central government. In sharp contrast to Japanese city authorities, municipalities in LDCs have smaller tax bases and limited borrowing capabilities and are continually besieged by multifaceted problems arising from rapid inflow of migrants. The bulk of such migrants are usually in the 15 - 25 age group, with minimal education and little assets of any sort. While straining the city's urban services such as shelter, energy, transportation and sanitation and health facilities, these migrants are in no position to create wealth for the city. Given this predicament, it is essential that central government in the LDCs be more receptive to the needs of the city experiencing high rate of urbanization. This will require a fundamental change in thinking, for central government in LDCs should acknowledge city administration as an integral part of development. In this aspect, Japanese approach to urban development, as indicated by this study, of considering the city within a context of cooperation and close interaction could provide exemplary lessons to LDCs.